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Editorial

Resist the anti-Moro war of the US-Estrada regime!

The Communist Party of the Philippines strongly condemns the all-out anti-Moro war of the reactionary US-Estrada regime. The Party also expresses the commitment of all revolutionary forces to resist this war by intensifying people's war nationwide.

The anti-Moro war is comprised principally of an all-out armed offensive in territories where the armed and political power of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front-Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (MILF-BIAF) prevails. It also includes the conduct of smear campaigns against the Moro people's religion and culture in order to create anti-Moro and anti-Muslim hysteria and justify the genocidal policy of hitting civilian populations and the outright violation of their civil rights.

The US-Estrada regime's all-out war has wrought great damage on the Moro people's livelihood and trampled on their interests and welfare. The reactionary regime has poured in 60% of AFP troops employing heavy artillery. It aims to crush the MILF-BIAF or compel it to surrender its armed struggle and sow fear among the Moro people. The Estrada regime wishes for the Moro people to bow to reactionary power and surrender their right and struggle for self-determination.

This intensified anti-Moro war is a continuation of the historic oppression of the Moro people



by the local exploiting classes and their foreign masters since the period of Spanish colonialism. Historically, the Moro people's struggles were temporarily defeated only after the reactionary powers employed superior armed force and coopted vacillating Moro leaders.

The reactionary regime is again stoking the flames of the anti-Moro war after the MILF-BIAF exhibited its determination to pursue the interests of the Moro people. The MILF-BIAF waved anew the banner of armed struggle for self-determination of the Moro people after its betrayal and surrender by the Moro National Liberation Front. The Ramos and Estrada regimes failed to lure the MILF-BIAF onto the path of capitulation through peace negotiations. Thus, the MILF-BIAF was able to continuously gather broadening support among the Moro people and gain strength in the realm of political and armed struggles.

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The anti-Moro war aims to put the rich resources of Mindanao under the full control of foreign big capitalists. Among the biggest supporters of the large-scale military offensive of the Estrada regime are the big foreign mining corporations interested in the large tracts of land in Central and Western Mindanao.

Estrada hopes that by waging an all-out war against the MILF-BIAF, it would be able to portray as stable what is in fact a tottering regime. By carrying out large-scale military operations, he labors under the illusion that the Moro people's struggle can be crushed and that this will help in depicting his regime as firm and in control.

But due to the viciousness of this war, the justness and correctness of the Moro people's struggle for self-determination becomes ever clearer. The Moro people will never be able to pursue their interests under the current oppressive system, whatever promise of autonomy or development is offered them. Thus, there is stronger unity among the Moro people, including their religious leaders, to fight the reactionary regime and militantly

defend their interests. They are reaping the broadening support of even the non-Moros.

After carrying out active defense and counter-offensives, the MILF-BIAF is now employing guerrilla tactics to fight the armed forces of the reactionary regime. They continue to deal ever-bigger blows against the AFP, resulting in sagging morale among the fascist troops.

The Estrada regime is wasting enormous resources in the AFP's continuing operations against the MILF-BIAF. The anti-Estrada factions within the military have become more daring in condemning and expressing disgust over the ruling regime.

Now, more than ever, the Filipino and Moro people need to unite. The agreement of cooperation between the MILF and NDFP will serve as a strong foundation for this unity. On its basis or inspiration, the different mass organizations of the Moro and Filipino people can unite in various ways and seize opportunities to muster the broadest forces in opposing the ruling US-Estrada regime.

The tactical offensives of the New People's Army against the troops of the reactionary enemy will serve as a primary binding force for this unity. We reiterate the call to take advantage of the overextendedness of AFP-PNP forces in many areas by ranging a superior force against small and isolated armed enemy units and rapidly broaden the revolutionary mass base in the countryside, while continuing to take appropriate measures to ensure security.

Through this and the widespread struggles of the people, Estrada's all-out war against the MILF-BIAF will only accelerate the weakening and downfall of his regime. **AB**

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The vicious anti-Moro war

The US-Estrada regime's vicious and all-out anti-Moro war continues to inflict harm on hundreds of thousands of people in Central, Southern and Southwestern Mindanao.

Desperate to crush the Moro people's revolutionary struggle led by the MILF-BIAF, the Estrada government junked the peace negotiations and deployed more than 50 battalions of military and police combat troops in MILF-BIAF territories.

The rampage of reactionary troops always results in intensified and wanton violations of human rights.

According to reports, from January to the first week of June, no less than 187 civilians have been killed, 25 have been wounded and five have disappeared due to military operations. As of the first week of June, 113,706 families or 598,929 persons have been forced to evacuate due to repeated bombings and violent attacks by reactionary troops. This number does not include those who did not seek shelter in 268 evacuation centers.

Up to 648 homes were destroyed by continuous assaults on communities like Balo-i, Lanao del Norte and Balabagan, Lanao del Sur. Most were burned, strafed or bombed by the AFP, PNP and vigilante groups in pursuit of suspected MILF members and supporters. In some cases, this was perpetrated by the military in non-Moro communities with the blame put on the MILF in order to sow anti-Moro hysteria.

Damage to the people's property,

crops, livestock and livelihood implements runs into the billions of pesos and continues to mount due to the reactionary armed forces' ruthless war.

In cramped and unsanitary evacuation centers where food and water are in short supply, more than 80,000, mostly children, women and the elderly have contracted measles, cholera, stomach and skin disorders, coughs and colds. Twenty-three women suffered miscarriages.

Apart from these violations of international humanitarian law, Estrada illegally orders food blockades. Even food meant for evacuees is confiscated by soldiers who charge that it is material support for the MILF. Military troops also block health and social workers in checkpoints, delaying relief operations in evacuation centers.

In the cities, planting and detonation of bombs by the AFP, PNP and their cohorts so they could blame it on Moros have inflicted damage and terror among ordinary citizens.

On May 28, the PNP led by Gen. Panfilo Lacson's PAOCTF illegally arrested 26 Moro men in Barangay Maharlika, Bicutan, Taguig, accusing them of being MILF members and the brains behind the bombings.

In the first week of June, two Moro migrant workers were brutally killed and robbed in Quiapo, Manila by members of the Western Police District. Because of the people's intense protests, the National Bureau of Investigation could not conceal the facts of the case. **AB**

At what price?

The US-Estrada regime pours up to P20-94 million daily on its anti-Moro war in Mindanao. To continue financing this war, the reactionary government has diverted a large percentage of funds allocated for social services. Estrada gives all-out support to his fascist troops while totally neglecting the people's welfare as shown in his regime's failure to provide for the

- **Construction of 25,000 classrooms (P7.5 billion)**
- **Purchase of 70.1 million textbooks (P4.9 billion)**
- **Employment of 44,423 new teachers (P1.52 billion)**
- **Increase in teachers' wages (P2 billion)**
- **Increase in the wages of government employees (P52.4 billion)**

All-out imposition of imperialist dictates on the economy

Despite severe criticism of imperialist “globalization” not only from the Philippines but from the whole world, the US-Estrada regime is pulling no stops to implement policies that open the national economy to unbridled plunder by imperialist countries.

As soon as he became president, Estrada attempted to amend the reactionary constitution to remove in one fell swoop any remaining provision protecting the national patrimony. The issue of amending provisions prohibiting foreign ownership of land and public utilities attained prominence along with Estrada’s plan to extend his term of office.

Also through Estrada’s prodding, the reactionary senate immediately ratified the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), a military pact between the Philippines and the US. The VFA allows US troops to utilize any part of the Philippines in pursuit of their military objectives, effectively transforming the country into one big US military base.

These past months, the Estrada government pushed laws to privatize public corporations and fully open certain sectors of the economy to foreign control to comply with conditions for new loans. Among the most significant of these laws are:

1. Retail Trade Bill. This was passed by the reactionary congress and senate in December 1999, despite opposition from small merchants. The retail trade, heretofore one of the few remaining sectors of the economy where small capitalists are protected,

will now be opened to 100% ownership by foreign big capitalists. For a mere \$50,000 (P200,000), any foreign company or individual may put up a specialty shop

that would compete with small Filipino stores. And for a mere \$2.5 million, small foreign-owned shops can be set up with up to 70% of shelf space allotted to imported goods.

2. Electricity Industry Reform Bill (or Omnibus Power Bill). This proposed law calls for the privatization of the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) and the reorganization of the power sector as a private sector. It deletes power generation from the list of public utilities and allows 100% foreign control over the sector. To favor multinationals or Estrada cronies planning to buy NAPOCOR, the company’s P3-trillion debt will be passed on to the people through added taxes or sky-high electricity costs.

3. Securities Bill 2000. This law is a step towards the full deregulation of the Philippine Stock Exchange, the foremost market for stocks and bonds of local corporations. It does away with government regulation of the stock market and raises the minimum capital requirement for brokerages to pave the way for the entry of foreign corporations and the booting out of smaller enterprises.

4. Amendments to the General Banking Act. This amends the General Banking Act that has already allowed the free entry of 10 foreign banks into the country. In expanding this provision, the law allows 100% foreign ownership of local banks. This is in preparation for the participation of foreign ►

Tattered safety nets

To appear pro-people and assuage blabbering reformists and petty bourgeois counterrevolutionaries, the Estrada government has implemented so-called “safety nets”, steps that would supposedly protect the people from the “negative effects” of “globalization”.

One example, a law that levies a tax on imported goods subsidized in their country of origin, has been enacted supposedly to shield local products from competition. This covers mostly agricultural products from Europe and the United States. But with the very low tax imposed and the goods’ extremely low cost, these products nonetheless end up cheaper than local ones.

Second is the Anti-Dumping Act that supposedly prohibits dumping of cheap commodities in the Philippines. Tariffs are also slapped on goods proven to have been dumped in the country. But before a country or company can be declared to have violated this law, a lengthy process is required to prove that equivalent local products are indeed endangered by the dumped imports.

Some academics and self-proclaimed progressives also call for “fair trade” or the “extension” of target dates for implementing full liberalization. They proceed from the foolish notion that “fair” trade is possible between imperialists and their semicolonies if the latter’s non-existent industries are given enough time to “develop”. They labor under the illusion that the Philippines could transcend its chronic crisis without going through revolutionary change. They deliberately extend a special service to imperialism. **AB**

Intensifying mass struggles

Thousands of workers took to the streets in different parts of the country on May 1. Led by the militant Kilusang Mayo Uno, they reiterated their demand for a P125 across-the-board increase in the minimum wage and called for the ouster of the US-Estrada regime. The mass actions were held in Manila, Southern Tagalog and the cities of Legazpi, Naga, Cebu, Mandaue, Iloilo, Bacolod, Dumaguete, Tacloban, Davao, Cagayan de Oro and Iligan.

The mass actions demonstrated the broadening support enjoyed by the struggling workers, including that from reactionary anti-Estrada personalities. Even Jaime Cardinal Sin expressed solidarity with the workers. In the provinces, some local government officials also joined the mass actions.

P125 wage increase. The struggle for a P125 nationwide and across-the-board wage increase was started last year and is a continuation of the struggle for a P100 hike begun in 1997.

Workers' real wages are diminishing rapidly. Basing on the 1989 value of the peso, last year's P198 minimum wage in Metro Manila amounts to only P74. A P125-wage increase would partially compensate for the erosion of real wages over the past decade but would not cover the estimated P460 needed daily by a family of six in Metro Manila.

Along with the struggle for a wage increase, workers are also demanding the repeal of the Wage Rationalization Act that mandates the negotiation for, and the setting of, minimum wages in regional wage boards. The government and capitalists use this law to block the nationwide unity of workers and avoid wage increases.

◀ monopoly banks and businesses in the privatization of the Philippine National Bank (PNB) and other government-owned banks. It was passed in December 1999 and signed into law by Estrada this May.

These bills were hastily passed by congress and the senate in April to comply with the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) conditions for a \$1-billion loan to cover the huge national budget deficit, a number of infrastructure projects and reforms in the financial sector.

The reactionary government is expected to rake in billions from the sale of NAPOCOR and PNB to favored multinationals or Estrada cronies. The proceeds will definitely be used to fund the 2001 elections.

In the face of the worsening economic crisis, the US-Estrada regime is implementing the worst anti-people

In October last year, the Metro Manila Regional Tripartite Wage Board insultingly announced a measly P25 increase in the minimum wage. Just as insulting is the P10-20 increase approved in other regions, which, in Central Luzon for instance, is to be given in two tranches.

Against the Estrada regime. This year, the militant workers' movement is at the forefront of the broadening unity for the ouster of the Estrada regime.

In their Labor Day mass action, the workers decried the regime's anti-people and pro-imperialist policies that push workers and the people deeper into poverty. They particularly denounced the continued privatization of state corporations that has already displaced thousands of workers and is threatening the job security of more than 12,000 employees in the coming months. They expressed their opposition to the upcoming privatization of the National Power Corporation, the National Food Authority and the Philippine National Bank, which would add to the 230 corporations previously auctioned off by the government.

The workers' movement firmly condemns Estrada's continued subservience to big local and foreign capitalist interests and the further worsening of the people's lot under imperialist "globalization".

Once more, the workers have demonstrated their determination to advance their interests not only against their exploitation by capitalists but also against their oppression by the reactionary regime and its foreign masters. The struggle for a wage increase bolsters the workers' militant stand. It inspires the broad masses of the people in their fight to oust the US-Estrada regime. **AB**

policies to ensure its hold on state power.

Aside from these laws, other policies calling for the gradual removal of tariffs and other taxes on imported products are being adopted to comply with the dictates of the WTO on full trade liberalization. Estrada also continues to push and defend the most execrable policies of past regimes such as the deregulation of the oil industry.

Estrada hopes to pass laws calling for new taxes during congress' next session. Accordingly, more than 10 such bills are pending in congress to comply with directives from the IMF and its ally private banks to the reactionary government to raise revenues in order to assure its ability to service its debt. All remaining publicly owned corporations, big hospitals and schools are due to be privatized. **AB**



Interview with Ka Roger

*Ang Bayan visited Party spokesperson Ka Roger in the middle of June. In an interview lasting more than two hours, he shared his views on burning national issues. A portion of the interview printed here has Ka Roger discussing the intensification of the anti-Moro war and how the US-Estrada regime is doomed to fail in this venture. **AB** will publish the entire interview in a forthcoming special issue.*

AB: The US-Estrada regime continues to intensify its war against the MILF in accordance with its June deadline. How do you view this and the events in Mindanao in general?

Ka Roger: First of all, the US-Estrada regime has been preparing for that ever since it came to power. As soon as he assumed office, Estrada implemented Oplan Makabayan, which aims to crush all groups fighting his government, primarily the Party, NPA, NDFP and the MILF.

If there is an Oplan Makabayan being waged against the Party and the NPA, there is an Oplan Pisces-Alpha for the MILF. Because Oplan Makabayan has failed, it is being replaced with Oplan Balangay. But no matter what name they choose for their operational plans, in essence they involve the reactionary government's all-out effort to consolidate its agencies and maximize their cooperation with the objective of crushing any force fighting the regime.

Nonetheless, no matter how much effort the Estrada regime puts into this, it will surely fail. Instead of being crushed, the revolutionary movements will only grow stronger.

The same will happen in Mindanao, in spite of the regime's conceit that it will crush the MILF after the June 30 ultimatum. This regime will one day find itself stunned with the fact that instead of having crushed the MILF, the latter will in fact have grown stronger

and expanded, since it will be obliged to use guerrilla tactics. Meanwhile, in the Visayas and Luzon, the NPA will strive to intensify tactical offensives. So the regime will end up having to eat its own words.

AB: What can you say about the Al Harakatul Islamiya or the Abu Sayyaf Group, its activities and the way the Estrada government has been dealing with it?

KR: As we all know, this Abu Sayyaf group is not fighting for an ideology. It only conducts various criminal activities. Not a few are aware that it is the government itself that created the Abu Sayyaf to divide the MNLF (before the latter capitulated). But now, the government is no longer in control of the Abu Sayyaf. The Abu Sayyaf has gone berserk, or as they say, it has gone crazy, as shown by its kidnapping of civilians for ransom.

But with the way the US-Estrada regime has been dealing with the Abu Sayyaf, it turns out that it is the government that is crazier. Just compare how the regime deals with this group with its macho stance and treachery regarding the peace talks with the NDF and MILF.

Already, the world views the government as a laughing stock. The regime has had to tuck its tail between its legs in the face of the Abu Sayyaf's hostage taking because of the pressure coming from the captives' countries of origin, which have warned Estrada

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situation because of its own doing.

AB: What can you say about the recent bombings which were allegedly perpetrated by “rebels”?

KR: Revolutionaries can never do that, especially not the NPA because the principles and guidelines of the New People’s Army strictly prohibit any move that would inflict harm on ordinary citizens or on civilians.

Should the NPA conduct bombings, its target would be military and other government installations so that it is the reactionary government’s machinery, and not innocent civilians, that will be directly damaged.

Regarding the arrest of 26 Moros accused as MILF members responsible for the bombings, hardly anyone believes this propaganda. If we are to review Gen. Panfilo Lacson and his Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Forces’ track record, this group specializes precisely in this—arbitrarily arresting people and accusing them of whatever crime they want to accuse them of.

But until now, Lacson and the PAOCTF have not proven anything, and as time passes, it is becoming more apparent that those arrested are innocent civilians, and that the evidence against them was merely planted.

AB: What motive could they have?

KR: It is clear that Mr. Estrada’s henchmen perpetrated the bombings to create a scenario similar to that

not to take any action that would endanger the lives of the hostages.

We can see now that the negotiation with the Abu Sayyaf has no direction, no future. So even the hostages’ countries are becoming impatient and restless. They can clearly see that the Estrada regime is not capable of rescuing these hostages and neither has it the capacity to take any other kind of action. Even as it boasts of launching military operations against the Abu Sayyaf, it is obvious that the regime is actually inutile. So the Estrada regime is now trapped in a very difficult

concocted by Marcos in 1972. If you have had the chance to monitor the news, you will note that in Zamboanga, there have been arrests of AFP and PNP elements carrying explosives. That was exactly how it was in 1972 before Marcos declared martial law, when bombings were blamed on the NPA. Later, AFP investigations showed that some Muntinlupa prisoners were let out and ordered to carry out bombings in Metro Manila. Then such bombings were blamed on the NPA.

AB: The PNP has been adamant in its accusations against the 26 Moros arrested. Recently, the PNP also summarily executed two Moros in Quiapo, alleging that they were MILF commanders. Then the desecration of a mosque in Camp Bushra in Lanao after an AFP attack hogged the headlines.

KR: It is obvious that they intend to inflame the sentiments of the Muslim people against Christians. The mass media are also being utilized to blame all the kidnappings and other atrocities on the Moros and a revolutionary organization such as the MILF is being presented side by side with a criminal syndicate such as the Abu Sayyaf to fuel the anger of the non-Moro people against Moros. There have also been other instances where churches in Mindanao have been bombed, such as the cathedral in Jolo, a church in Davao Oriental and another in Davao City.

What they really want is to portray the war in Mindanao as a war with religious undertones. They insist on diverting the people’s attention from the real issues—the Estrada government’s exploitation of the people, its rottenness and its inability to respond to the interests of the people of Mindanao whether they be Muslims or Christians. **AB**

NO MATTER WHAT NAME THEY CHOOSE FOR THEIR OPERATIONAL PLANS, IN ESSENCE THEY INVOLVE THE REACTIONARY GOVERNMENT’S ALL-OUT EFFORT TO CONSOLIDATE ITS AGENCIES AND MAXIMIZE THEIR COOPERATION WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF CRUSHING ANY FORCE FIGHTING THE REGIME. NONETHELESS, NO MATTER HOW MUCH EFFORT THE ESTRADA REGIME PUTS INTO THIS, IT WILL SURELY FAIL. INSTEAD OF BEING CRUSHED, THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS WILL ONLY GROW STRONGER.

Intensifying oppression and suppression of youth and students

The US-Estrada regime is incessantly imposing an ever-heavier burden on the youth, students and their parents. It is promoting the commercialized educational system and unabashedly trampling upon students' democratic rights.

Out-of-school youth are increasing in number. Sixty percent (60%) of children who enter elementary schools are forced to drop out in the second grade due to the high cost of education. Even more in number are those who never get to go to high school or college because of the fees they could ill afford. Consequently, more than 5.7 million children are working instead of studying.

Incessant tuition fee increases. In the first month alone of this school year, 315 private colleges and universities are set to raise tuition and other fees by 10-50%. This number does not include those that hiked tuition rates in the first months of the year such as the 35 schools in Western Visayas that implemented increases of 7-33% in February. In 1999, 394 private colleges and universities increased tuition fees, some by up to 70%. More than 200 did so in 1998.

These were all approved and even encouraged by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) and the Commission on Higher Education.

Worse, even state colleges and universities are set to raise their tuition fees. Among these are some Mindanao schools that plan to raise their fees to P40 per unit this school year, on top of last year's hike of at least 50%.

Slashing meager budgets. This year's education budget is almost P10 billion less than last year's. The slash was made despite the increasing number of students and the pressing need for more teachers, classrooms and textbooks among others. The DECS itself admits that there is a need for an additional 44,423 teachers and 25,000 classrooms this year.

The University of the Philippines' budget, originally P4.2 billion, has been reduced by P155 million. A P2 million-cut was also made on the Davao Oriental State College's P37 million-budget. Even public elementary schools underwent drastic budget

cuts. In this regard, schools have abolished their student loan programs.

Towards the ultimate goal of completely abandoning the responsibility of funding state colleges and universities, the government requires them to generate their own funds through business and other means.

Suppression of campus press freedom and other rights. Infringement upon campus press freedom and the students' basic right to self-organization and assembly continues. The Campus Journalism Act of 1991 is being used to silence student publications

critical of school administrations or the government. Nationwide, many students and publications have suffered harassment for criticizing unjust policies and the raking in of huge profits by schools. Not a few of them were expelled or criminally charged by school owners.

The regime and school administrations prohibit students from waging protest actions. Students were expelled from the University of the East-Recto and the University of San Jose-Recoletos in Cebu City for protesting tuition fee hikes. On January 27, four students were arrested for joining a rally in front of Malacañang to demand a bigger education budget. The police violently dispersed the rally, injuring more than 100 students.

With the intensifying oppression and suppression of youth and students, it has become ever clear to them that they need to stand up, organize and fight for their democratic interests.

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That youth and student mobilizations are becoming more vigorous this year is a welcome development. Alongside their struggle against policies that oppress them, the youth and students stand firmly united with the Filipino people against ceaseless oil price increases and the US-Estrada regime's intensifying fascism and for an increase in workers' wages.

We are confident that in the near future, youth and students in their tens of thousands will continue to march on the streets and other fronts to fight for their democratic interests and join the clamor for revolutionary change. **AB**

Ka Roger's Message to Jenina Buan

Following is CPP spokesman Comrade Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal's reply to Jenina, daughter of prisoner of war Philippine Army Maj. Noel Buan, who appealed for her father's release. Buan, intelligence chief of the Southern Luzon Command (SOLCOM), was arrested on July 7, 1999 in Lucena City by a special unit of the Melito Glor Command (MGC).

First of all, we are all unhappy with the fact that there are children separated from their fathers like Jenina, whose father happens to be a prisoner of war of the MGC. But it should be pointed out to Jenina that this situation was brought about by the war being waged by the US-Estrada regime against the revolution and the Filipino people.

Where there is war, where there is civil war, there are captives. It so happened that Maj. Noel Buan was captured by the NPA and that the Estrada regime is obstinate, hard-headed and refuses to negotiate with the NDFP. Thus, though we are sorry for the sadness this has caused Major Buan's family, all we can do is to find ways to shorten, if not hasten,

the process of negotiation as opposed to what Estrada wants to happen.

Secondly, I would like to tell Jenina that she is still fortunate because her father, although a captive of the MGC, enjoys the rights of a prisoner of war. Though Buan is a known SOLCOM intelligence officer, he is being treated well by the NPA fighters watching over him. This is so unlike the way the reactionary and mercenary Armed Forces of the Philippines treats our comrades and suspected revolutionaries, who when captured by the military and the PNP are either summarily executed or tortured and suffer various violations of their rights.

I am stating all this to let Jenina and her mother Mrs. Buan know that their sorrow is not unlike that of countless sons, daughters and relatives of revolutionaries and suspected revolutionaries and likewise that of the children of many Filipinos who are victims of the violence being unleashed by the AFP and PNP not only in Mindanao, not only in Southern Tagalog but all over the country. **AB**

NDFP rescinds order to release prisoner of war

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) rescinded on May 16 its order for the release of P/Chief Insp. Abelardo Martin, a prisoner of war held by the New People's Army. This was due to Estrada's refusal to order a suspension of offensive military operations (SOMO) in certain areas in Southern Tagalog for a specified period. The implementation of a SOMO is among the provisions of the Memorandum of Agreement between the NDFP and the Humanitarian Peace Mission led by Sen. Loren Legarda.

Estrada continues to ignore appeals from Legarda's group. The Estrada camp is shamelessly apathetic towards the welfare of its own soldiers, and the regime continues to endanger its personnel being held captive by the NPA with the all-out military operations in Southern Tagalog where 15 AFP and PNP battalions have been deployed.

Martin was arrested on November 3, 1999 in Dolores, Quezon. He has been proven innocent of any grave crime against the people and the revolutionary movement. The NDFP had already endorsed his release on February 11.

Martin is under the custody of the Melito Glor Command (Southern Tagalog Regional Command) of the NPA. **AB**

Continuing economic stagnation in Japan

The more than a decade long economic stagnation in Japan is a reflection of the insolvable crisis of the world capitalist system. Japan is suffering under the weight of the overproduction crisis and the intensity of US imperialist competition for limited markets especially in the Asia-Pacific region.

The failure of Japan to decisively overcome the crisis is presently one of the biggest headaches of the imperialist powers. Japan has served as one of the principal markets importing the raw material and semiprocessed products exported by backward semicolonies and as the biggest financiers of reactionary governments.

The Japanese bubble economy, fueled by all-out real estate speculation and funding of infrastructure projects, burst in 1990. Since then, the Japanese economy has failed to recover.

To resurrect the economy, the Japanese government repeatedly carried out pump-priming projects pouring billions of dollars in construction. It has spent \$1.5 trillion in the past eight years. From July 1998 to December 1999, it spent \$142 billion in public works.

Despite these successive programs, whose benefits, such as employment and boosting production, are necessarily temporary, the Japanese economy continues to stagger. The Japanese economy plunged into a recession in 1992, 1994-1996 and 1998. Last year, it is estimated that the Japanese economy grew by only 0.6%.

Problems continue to plague Japan's financial system. Japanese banks went bankrupt as they served as the principal source of funding for unproductive infrastructure projects and large-scale real estate and money market speculation. In mid-1998, after the Asian economic crisis erupted, Japanese banks' bad loans were estimated to have reached \$531 billion.

This is aside from the mounting public debt resulting from the pouring of funds into construction. The total bad debts of local governments in Japan (up to January 2000) has reached \$6 trillion. Last year, total public debt in Japan represented 130%-200% of domestic production.

Local production continually went down as a result of the export of production or the setting up of industrial factories in the semicolonies to exploit cheap labor power especially in the 1980s. Corollarily, the unemployment problem in Japan started to grow slowly, fueling disgust among the Japanese workers.

Because of the economic crisis in the Asian semicolonies, the largest market of Japan, local production plunged. In the manufacturing, construction and agricultural sectors, 1.7 million workers lost their jobs from 1997 to 1998. In March, the unemployment rate was estimated to have reached 4.9%—i.e. 3.29 million workers are unemployed. A government report last April boasted that there are 130,000 new jobs.

The truth, however, is that most of these are part-time jobs: the number of full-time workers dropped by 1% compared to the April 1999 figure.

This situation will worsen because of the Japanese economic restructuring being pushed by the US and IMF. Among the policies to be carried out is the raising of interest rates as determined by Japan's central bank (the Bank of Japan). In the interest rate hike planned for the end of the year, the Japanese government hopes to compel business to restructure their operations to make them more "efficient", which primarily means carrying out widespread labor flexibilization including large-scale retrenchment, labor contractualization and other similar

policies. Since 1997, the real wages of Japanese workers have been dropping by 1.5% each year.

The social status of the Japanese people and proletariat is deteriorating and their living conditions are becoming more difficult. Millions of unemployed, homeless and ordinary people are poised to suffer heavy blows from the neoliberal policies of deregulation and liberalization. Consequently, the Japanese people and proletariat are rapidly being persuaded to march along the militant path of resistance. The efforts to lower costs of production and push flexibilization are igniting widespread workers' strikes. **AB**

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Mass struggles advancing in Southern Tagalog

People's struggles against widespread landgrabbing, the US-Estrada regime's brazen fascist rule and ever-increasing landfill and quarrying operations are advancing in Southern Tagalog.

Land-use conversion.

Peasant and fisherfolk organizations are protesting the prevalent landgrabbing and conversion of agricultural land, fishing areas, coastal communities and forests by landlords and local and foreign capitalists.

Among the projects being resisted are Fil-Estate, Sta. Lucia Realty and Manila Southcoast Development Corporation's Harbortown in Nasugbu, Batangas; the Batulao Nature City in a 1,300-hectare farmland in Patugo, Balayan; the Pentaport Project in North Quezon; the conversion of Laguna Lake and Taal Lake and the privatization of almost all of the region's coastal areas. Aside from exposing the widespread dislocation, poverty and hunger wrought by land use conversion, the farmers are also advancing the call for genuine land reform.

Militarization. The people of Southern Tagalog continue to expose and oppose the US-Estrada regime's Oplan Makabayan, which in a span of more than a year has resulted in 378 cases of illegal arrest, torture

and detention; 14 cases of summary execution; 23 cases of massacre; and five disappearances. Victimized by illegal searches and forced evacuations were 225 families. The military also destroyed 14 houses.

There are currently 12 AFP combat battalions, two PNP battalions, CAFGU and other paramilitary forces deployed in the region.

Quarrying. The people are rallying against a growing number of quarries that are harmful to the people and the environment. Widespread quarrying is part of the CALABARZON and MIMAROPA (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan) programs that benefit electric power plants, roads, international ports, subdivisions and industrial estates. Today, major quarrying sites in the region may be found in Rizal; Laguna; Sariaya, Quezon; Maragondon and Ternate, Cavite; and Tuy and Ilijan, Batangas.

Garbage. Protests are also being waged against the mindless dumping of growing volumes of garbage in landfills in Southern Tagalog. The tons of garbage from Manila and multinational and transnational factories that are being dumped in San Mateo, Rizal; Carmona, Cavite; and Mabitac and Paete, Laguna pose hazards to the people's health and the environment. **AB**

BRIGADE COMMANDER, 12 SOLDIERS KILLED IN ISABELA AMBUSH

A Philippine Army brigade commander and 12 other soldiers were killed when their convoy was ambushed by the New People's Army (NPA) on June 27 along the boundaries of Barangay Linomot and Barangay Sta. Isabel in Jones, Isabela. Col. Josefino Manayao, 502nd Infantry Brigade commander and another soldier died in hospital while 11 others, including 54th IB executive officer 2Lt. Wilfredo Estanislao, died on the spot. Manayao and Estanislao are both Philippine Military Academy graduates.

The offensive was signalled with the detonation of an explosive charge that hit a truck at the tail end of the convoy of five military vehicles. Confiscated from the ambush were 11 M16 rifles and one M203 grenade launcher.

According to the NPA Benito Tesorio Command in Isabela, the notorious 502nd Brigade is responsible for widespread human rights violations, including the torture and salvaging of suspected revolutionaries and the bombing and forced evacuation of entire communities in Isabela.

7 SOLDIERS, 1 CAFGU KILLED IN SAMAR AMBUSH

Seven Philippine Army soldiers and a CAFGU element were killed while another one was wounded in an ambush by Red fighters in Maslog, Eastern Samar. The ambush was launched on June 15 at around 10 a.m. The ambushed troops were among a 10-man composite team under the 14th IB.

DESPOTIC LANDLORD PUNISHED IN LEYTE

NPA guerrillas meted out revolutionary justice on a despotic landlord in Leyte on June 12. Joaquin Labra had just visited his sugar plantation and was aboard his jeep on his way home when ambushed by NPA fighters in Barangay Natugban, Kananga.

Labra was punished because of his grave crimes against the people, among them being the mastermind in the murder of Reynaldo Villota on August 22, 1999. Labra was also guilty of several

counts of landgrabbing as well as harassment and intimidation of farmers defending their land rights.

policemen, SPO1 Petronilo Quiban and SPO1 Rodrigo Rufin.

PUNITIVE ACTION LAUNCHED IN BOHOL

Red fighters punished the AER Construction Inc., a subcontractor of a Japanese company in Barangay Imelda, Ubay, Bohol.

At around 7 p.m. on June 23, the people's army raided the company motorpool within the compound of the National Power Corporation. The guerrillas were able to enter without difficulty because they fooled the guards into believing that they were government soldiers conducting operations in the area. Heavy equipment were burned, including two dump trucks, a cement mixer and a bucket truck. Total damage to the company was estimated to have reached P3 million.

Before they retreated, the Red fighters introduced themselves and explained to the guards and company workers the basis of the punitive action.

NPA RAIDS SMART CELL SITE IN QUEZON

NPA guerrillas swiftly assaulted on May 19 a Smart Communications cell site in Villapadua, Gumaca, Quezon at 12:45 noon.

A lone company guard was disarmed. The guardhouse, a communication van, two generators along with the latter's stockroom were burned. Damage to the company amounted to almost P1 million. The punitive action was launched because of the company's stubborn refusal to adhere to revolutionary policies being implemented by the movement in the area.

MACHINE GUN, 2 RIFLES CONFISCATED IN SURIGAO AMBUSH

A squad of security guards and Philippine Army soldiers patrolling the interior areas of Tago, Surigao del Sur were ambushed by NPA Red fighters on May 13. Surigao Development Corporation security guards and the military regularly conduct joint patrols in the area. They connive in harassing and abusing company workers and people living near the company premises.

A corporal and two guards were killed while a sergeant was wounded and a machine gun and two rifles were confiscated in the offensive.

Meanwhile, a sparrow operation was launched in Surigao City on May 19. Punished were two abusive

TWO CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES IN NUEVA ECIJA PUNISHED

NPA fighters conducted separate raids on the depots of two huge construction companies in San Jose City in May.

On May 20, the NPA launched a swift assault on the depot of a Korean construction company. A 10-wheeler truck was burned.

Meanwhile, the JTY Construction Corp. was also punished on May 1 at around 11 p.m. Disarmed were two security guards of the company owned by Juanito Ty, a contractor of the Casecnan Multipurpose Irrigation and Electricity projects. A Hyundai payloader and a dump truck were burned. Damage was placed at P700, 000. Three handheld radios and two cal .38 pistols were confiscated.

The companies were punished for ignoring the revolutionary movement's existing taxation policies. JTY Construction Corp. is also responsible for the unpaid wages of its aggrieved workers.

RELEASE OF 2 PRISONERS DEMANDED BY GREEKS

More than 150 people from Athens and Sparta, Greece demanded the release of Leonardo Pitao (Ka Parago) and other political prisoners in the Philippines. In a statement released on June 26 and 27, the Greeks also denounced rising repression in the Philippines amid the worsening socio-economic crisis and intensifying exploitation of the Filipino people by foreign monopoly capitalists.

Pitao is only one of more than 200 political prisoners arrested without warrant, illegally detained, tortured and charged with criminal offenses in the first two years of the Estrada regime.

Meantime, 148 Greeks also called for the immediate release of 12-year-old Edfu dela Cruz. They signed a statement issued in Athens on June 27 by A/Synechia, a revolutionary organization in Greece.

Edfu, whose mother and father were both NPA fighters, was captured by the military on March 12 in Bontoc, Leyte after a firefight where his parents, sister and two others were killed. The Department of Social Welfare and Development has been forcibly holding Edfu instead of transferring him to the custody of his grandmother.